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THE great men, who introduced the reformation into theſe kingdoms, were ſo ſenſible of the neceſſity of maintaining devotion in the minds of the vulgar by ſome external objects, by ſomewhat of ceremony and form, that they refrained from intirely ripping off all ornament from the drapery of religion. When they were purging the calendar of legions of viſionary ſaints, they took due care to defend the niches of real martyrs from profanation. They preſerved the holy feſtivals, which

which had been conſecrated for many ages to the great luminaries of the church, and at once paid proper obſervance to the memory of the good, and fell in with the popular humour, which loves to rejoice and mourn at the diſcretion of the almanack.

IN ſo enlightened an age as the preſent, I ſhall perhaps be ridiculed if I hint, as my opinion, that the obſervation of certain feſtivals is ſomething more than a mere political inſtitution. I cannot, however, help thinking that even nature itſelf concurs to confirm my ſentiment. Philoſophers and freethinkers tell us that a general ſyſtem was laid down at firſt, and that no deviations have been made to accommodate it to any ſubſequent events, or to favour and authorize any human inſtitutions. When the reformation of the calendar was in agitation, to the great diſguſt of many worthy perſons who urged how great the harmony was in the old eſtabliſhment between the holidays and their attributes (if I may call them ſo), and what a confuſion would follow if Michaelmas-day, for inſtance, was not to be celebrated, when ſtubble geeſe are in their higheſt perfection; it was replied, that ſuch a propriety was merely imaginary, and would be loſt of itſelf, even without any alteration of the calendar by authority: for if the errors in it were ſuffered to go on, they would in a certain number of years produce ſuch a variation, that we ſhould be mourning for good king Charles on a falſe thirtieth of January, at a time of year when our anceſtors uſed to be tumbling over head and heels in Greenwich park in honour of Whitſuntide; and at length be chooſing king and queen for Twelfth-night, when we ought to be admiring the London prentice at Bartholomew fair.

COGENT as theſe reaſons may ſeem, yet I think I can

can confute them from the teſtimony of a ſtanding miracle, which not having ſubmitted to the fallible authority of an act of parliament, may well be ſaid to put a ſupernatural negative on the wiſdom of this world. My readers no doubt are already aware that I have in my eye the wonderful thorn of Glaſtonbury, which though hitherto regarded as a trunk of popiſh impoſture, has notably exerted itſelf as the moſt proteſtant plant in the univerſe. It is well known that the correction of the calendar was enacted by Pope Gregory the thirteenth, and that the reformed churches have with a proper ſpirit of oppoſition adhered to the old calculation of the emperor Julius Cæſar, who was by no means a papiſt. Near two years ago the popiſh calendar was brought in (I hope by perſons well-affected!) certain it is that the Glaſtonbury thorn has preſerved its inflexibility, and obſerved it's old anniverſary. Many thouſand ſpectators viſited it on the parliamentary Chriſtmas-day——Not a bud was to be ſeen!——On the true nativity it was covered with bloſſoms. One muſt be an infidel indeed to ſpurn at ſuch authority. Had I been conſulted (and mathematical ſtudies have not been the moſt inconſiderable of my ſpeculations), inſtead of turning the calendar topſy-turvy by fantaſtic calculations, I ſhould have propoſed to regulate the year by the infallible Somerſetſhire thorn, and to have reckoned the months from Chriſtmas-day, which ſhould always have been kept as the Glaſtonbury thorn ſhould blow.

MANY inconveniencies, to be ſure, would follow from this ſyſtem, but as holy things ought to be the firſt conſideration of a religious nation, the inconveniencies ſhould be overlooked. The thorn can never blow but on the true Chriſtmas-day; and conſequently the apprehenſion

of

of the year's becoming inverted by ſticking to the Julian account can never hold. If the courſe of the ſun varies, aſtronomers may find out ſome way to adjuſt that: but it is prepoſterous, not to ſay preſumptuous, to be celebrating Chriſtmas-day, when the Glaſtonbury thorn, which certainly muſt know times and ſeaſons better than an almanack-maker, declares it to be hereſy.

NOR is Chriſtmas-day the only jubilee which will be morally diſturbed by this innovation. There is another anniverſary of no leſs celebrity among Engliſhmen, equally marked by a marvellous concomitance of circumſtances, and which I venture to prognoſticate will not attend the erroneous calculation of the preſent ſyſtem. The day I mean is the firſt of April. The oldeſt tradition affirms that ſuch an infatuation attends the firſt day of that month, as no foreſight can eſcape, no vigilance can defeat. Deceit is ſucceſsful on that day out of the mouths of babes and ſucklings. Grave citizens have been bit upon it; uſurers have lent their money on bad ſecurity; experienced matrons have married very diſappointing young fellows; mathematicians have miſſed the longitude; alchymiſts the philoſopher's ſtone; and politicians preferment on that day.

WHAT confuſion will not follow, if the great body of the nation are diſappointed of their peculiar holiday! This country was formerly diſturbed with very fatal quarrels about the celebration of Eaſter; and no wiſe man will tell me that it is not as reaſonable to fall out for the obſervance of April-fool-day. Can any benefits ariſing from a regulated calendar make amends for an occaſion of new ſects? How many warm men may reſent an attempt to play them off on a falſe firſt of April, who would have ſubmitted to the cuſtom of being made fools

fools on the old computation? If our clergy come to be divided about Folly's anniverſary, we may well expect all the miſchiefs attendant on religious wars; and we ſhall have reaſon to wiſh that the Glaſtonbury thorn would declare as remarkably in favour of the true April-fool-day, as it has in behalf of the genuine Chriſtmas.

THERE are many other inconveniencies, which I might lament very emphatically, but none of weight enough to be compared with thoſe I have mentioned. I ſhall only hint at a whole ſyſtem overturned by this revolution in the calendar, and no proviſion, that I have heard of, made by the legiſlature to remedy it. Yet in a nation which beſtows ſuch ample rewards on new-year and birth-day odes, it is aſtoniſhing that the late act of parliament ſhould have overlooked that uſeful branch of our poetry, which conſiſts in couplets, ſaws, and proverbs, peculiar to certain days and ſeaſons. Why was not a new ſet of diſtichs provided by the late reformers? Or at leaſt a clauſe inſerted in the act, enjoining the poet-laureat or ſome beneficed genius to prepare and new-caſt the eſtabliſhed rhimes for public uſe? Were our aſtronomers ſo ignorant as to think that the old proverbs would ſerve for their new-fangled calendar? Could they imagine that St. Swithin would accommodate her rainy planet to the convenience of their calculations? Who that hears the following verſes, but muſt grieve for the ſhepherd and huſbandman, who may have all their prognoſtics confounded, and be at a loſs to know beforehand the fate of their markets? Ancient ſages ſung

If St. Paul *be fair and clear,*
Then will betide a happy year,
But if it either ſnow or rain,
Then will be dear all kind of grain:
And if the wind doth blow aloft,
Then wars will vex the realm full oft.